

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
February 16, 2014
The Christian Education Mission**

Proverbs 22:6

"Training Needed"

- 1. Instructions Not Included**
- 2. Two Pitfalls of Parenting**
- 3. The Biblical Strategy**

**Hymns: 82 (vv. 1-4) – 462 – 511 - 94
– Closing 82 (v.5)**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Today, we continue our look at the Christian Education Mission given to each one of us in the Word of God. As we began last week, our message took us to the motivation of Christian Education. In John 8:31, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples." Our main objective as followers of Jesus is to hold onto his Word, so that others receive the whole Truth, and not just bits and pieces of it. And we closed last week by observing that if holding onto the truth is going to be the main objective, then education will be important. Today, our look at the Christian Education Mission takes us to where it all begins, and that is in the home.

The young couple has not slept for a day and a night, but no amount of tiredness could affect the joy that has come into their lives. In an instant their lives have changed, and they now have new titles in life, they are mom and dad. Their joy is beaming as they leave the hospital, but upon arriving home, a new and scary reality finally hits them: they've never done this before, and besides a quick tutorial on swaddling, the staff at the hospital sent them home without so much as an instruction manual. Every parent thinks they are prepared, from watching others, from helping with other babies, from taking a 3-hour parenting class, but the truth is that nothing can prepare a young father and mother for all that comes with parenthood.

Much like we learned last week, when we looked at the many directives that Christ has given to his disciples, God has also given to parents a bevy of responsibilities, and those responsibilities are like nothing that they've ever been given before: life is in their hands. And each child that comes into the world might as well have a stamp on them that says, "Training Needed." And as parents take on that all important role of raising children, it is so very easy to get overwhelmed, it is so very easy to get lost. And it can leave parents asking questions: Where do we start? What do we do? What did we get ourselves into here?

When it comes to training and raising children, parents can find a vast array of help and guidance. Advice and suggestions come from all angles, from friends and family, from books and the internet, even from doctors, they all have suggestions as to what kind of training your child needs. While every child is unique and every parent is different, it seems to me that there are two poles of parenthood, and every parent has a tendency to veer off toward one or the other. On one end, parents can do exactly what Paul warns against in Ephesians 6 and exasperate or overwhelm their children. In an effort to keep their children safe and away from mistakes, parents can load children with so many rules and restrictions that they threaten to become frustrated and rebellious. On the other end, parents might take a step back, and say that rather than telling their children how to live, they will let them learn from experience. Hoping to avoid overbearance, the reality is that parents end up letting the world train their children, and the result is that children take on the beliefs and actions of the world. Whether it be "strictness" over here, or "freedom" over here, every parent struggles to stay in that narrow middle, knowing that training is needed, but not overdoing it.

So, what to do? Quite obviously, the place where I will tell you to turn this morning is the Word of God. As God gives children that need training to parents, he also gives parents the Biblical strategy for that training. The directive for disciples this week comes from Proverbs 22:6. There the Holy Spirit, writing through King Solomon gives this mission to parents: **"Train a child in the way he should go."**

It sounds like such a simple directive, doesn't it? What God says to parents as they look to how to raise their children is pretty basic: Use the Word of God. And yet any of us, whether parents or not, can understand the difficulty of the mission that God gives there in

those words. In every way, to train a child in the way he should go is a daunting mission.

It is daunting, first and foremost, because every parent faces internal doubts about their ability to carry out this directive from the Lord. Those doubts come from our knowledge of how often we ourselves fail to live according to the Word and go in the ways that we should go. As we struggle to follow the commands of God, who are we to train others to do so? Jesus himself said that the blind cannot lead the blind, and our lives are often a testament to how blind we can be.

The task is made daunting as well, by the fact that we are training children who are just as sinful as we are. As perfect as we think our children might be when we first hold them in our arms, it doesn't take long to know that they are not. They are prone to wander; they are by nature rebellious; they will fight instruction and go in their own ways.

When you combine imperfect teachers with imperfect followers, there are certain to be struggles and frustrations and even failures. And those troubles in parenting are Satan's attempts to have us grow weary of the important mission that parents have in training children. Satan wants children to rebel. Satan wants parents to push too hard and drive away. Satan wants parents to raise up their hands in frustration and children to find their training in the world. He wants us to veer away from the missions that are given to both parents and children.

Perhaps that is why God keeps his advice to parents so simple. **“Train a child in the way he should go.”** For disciples who make it their #1 objective to hold to the Word of God, we make it our #1 parental goal to train our children in that Word of God. We take them to that Word, because there we, and they, find guidelines for life – commands that shape God's expectations for life, not the world's. We take them to that Word because there we, and they, are taught repentance – taking accountability for actions and admitting our wrongdoings, and turning to the work of Jesus for forgiveness. We take them to that Word because there we, and they, are shown the motivation for the Christian life – which is the love that God has shown to us through his Son and every other blessing – and also how to live the Christian life – to grow in the fruits of the Spirit. When parents turn to the Word of God to provide training from the Word of God, God knows that they will grow in love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control right alongside their

children. God wants his disciples to take his children to the Word, train them in the Word, and raise them in the Word.

Though the task is daunting, and it often comes with struggles, God keeps us going in that mission with a promise: **“Train a child in the way he should go,’ God says, ‘and when he is old he will not depart from it.”** To those that follow God's advice and give the training in God's Word that is needed, God gives a beautiful assurance. One's childhood training is never entirely forgotten. And while parents who train their children in the Word of God may see their children wander and may struggle when it seems like their children have abandoned what was given to them, God here says that it will always be there as a reminder, a corrective, a directive on the path to heaven. What a wonderful assurance that is, what a wonderful encouragement that is for parents to focus on the directive that he has given them: to train in the Word, and then to trust in God that He will take care of keeping the promise that he has given.

Besides the promise given to encourage parents, God also provides Christian parents with other encouragers. Did you notice the audience in our first lesson this morning from Deuteronomy? In those words, Moses was speaking directly to parents as he told them to teach and train their children, but it wasn't just parents that Moses spoke to. Moses gave those directives as the entire nation of Israel listened on. Just as there are here today, there were certainly many in that crowd that listened to Moses speak about parenting who were not parents. Yet, Moses wanted all of them to hear what was expected of parents. Those people were to be encouragers, they were to be helpers, they were to be supporters.

Today, God speaks to all of us. To parents he speaks directly, but to those who are not, he also has a message. Look around at the parents around you and help them as they carry out this very important task that God has given to them. Be patient as they train their children to listen and be involved in worship. Be encouraging when you see them struggling. Offer a helping hand when you see them juggling. But most of all, keep that directive from God in front of them. Their child needs training, and God wants it to be done right here.

To parents, God gives a great privilege. He gives them his children and asks parents to give them the training that will lead them back home to their heavenly Father one day. The directive

is daunting, it comes with struggles, but to train in the Lord is the greatest joy of parenting. So, train in the Word; and then trust in God to keep his promise. Amen.